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AUTHOR Herbster, Douglas
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ABSTRACT

Based on results from a sample of the entire Montana public high school system and 5 Montana teacher training institutions, followed by a telephone survey of 15 superintendents/curriculum directors and directors of placement from the 5 institutions used in the original study, there were indeed definite hiring preferences shown toward applicant secondary teachers. Areas in which preferences were most salient were professional educational preparation, number of years of classroom teaching experience, and whether applicant teachers were endorsed in single-field or multi-field subject areas(s). Smaller schools preferred teachers who could teach more than one subject area. Larger schools preferred teachers who specialized in a particular field. Both larger and small schools preferred teachers with bachelor's degrees. Smaller districts preferred teachers with little or no experience because of limited funds for teachers' salaries. Larger districts preferred teachers with no more than five years' experience. College students currently enrolled in secondary teaching curricula should be encouraged to certify in subject areas in which the supply of teachers is not expected to greatly exceed demand. Students should consider dual or even multiple subject certification. Colleges involved in teacher training should place greater emphasis on improving teaching techniques of existing teachers and those teacher candidates currently in training. (BRR)

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RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Presented by:

Dr. Douglas Herbster
Montana State University

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Following is a summary of the combined results obtained by Dr. Don Hills and also a more recent telephone survey by Dr. Doug Herbster in October, 1982.

The original survey by Dr. Hills sampled the entire public high school system in the State of Montana and the following teacher training institutions in Montana.

1. Montana State University
2. University of Montana
3. Eastern Montana College
4. Western Montana College
5. Northern Montana College

Montana public school districts are divided into three classes:

Class I - 6,500 or more

Class II - 1,000 - 6,500

Class III - 1,000 or less

Dr. Herbster's survey consisted of five superintendents or curriculum directors, whomever was in charge of hiring, from each Class and the Director of Placement from each of the five teacher training institutes used in the original study.

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

The number of certified secondary public school teachers has increased dramatically over the past two decades. The "teacher shortage" of the war years and the 1950's and 1960's has all but vanished. These facts coupled with lowering public school enrollments due to birth rate decreases throughout the United States and Montana have placed severe burdens on secondary school teachers looking for new employment.

Rural district superintendents of schools are usually empowered by district school boards to recommend to these boards secondary teachers to be hired to fill vacancies in teaching staffs. Because of the large numbers of secondary teachers presently available today, district superintendents of schools can afford to be very selective when filling these vacant positions. A prosepective secondary teacher must therefore give himself every advantage in this highly competitive job market. A prospective secondary teacher should have beforehand knowledge of the job market's (1) most desirable or least desirable single-field subject competency, (2) the most desirable multi-field major-minor subject areas, (3) the range of years of classroom teaching experience most preferred by hiring district superintendents of schools, (4) the professional preparational levels preferred most by hiring district superintendents of schools, and (5) the influence previous superintendency experience hiring district superintendents of schools might have on hiring preferences for applicant secondary teachers. A prospective teacher with this information will have provided himself an employment advantage over the competition.

Among the conclusions obtained from this study are college-bound students considering education or college students enrolled in education curricula need be aware of secondary teaching subjects in highest demand among hiring district superintendents of schools. Practicing secondary teachers also need be aware of possible hiring preference changes of district superintendents of schools brought on by increased classroom teaching experience and/or advanced certification resulting from earned fifth-year endorsements, master's degrees, or doctorate degrees.

This study points out there are indeed definite hiring preferences shown toward applicant secondary teachers in the areas of professional educational preparation, the number of years of classroom teaching experience, and whether the applicant teacher is endorsed in a single-field or a multi-field subject area.

Following is a brief summary of the findings of all of the components questioned:

I. Smaller schools prefer teachers who can teach more than one subject area (example, math, science, English and social studies).

II. Larger schools prefer teachers who are specialized in a particular field. They prefer teachers teaching in their major field.

III. Both the larger and small schools prefer teachers with a bachelors degree. Many larger districts encourage a masters degree after they are employed. Many smaller districts do not encourage a masters degree at any time. Some of the larger districts in Montana allow for salary differences for the doctorate degree, but more of the school officials stated they discourage the degree for the classroom teacher.

IV. The smaller districts prefer teachers with little or no experience because of limited funds used for teachers' salaries. The larger districts

prefer teachers with no more than five years of experience. Many larger districts allow up to five years experience on their salary schedule.

V. The subject areas which are very critical in both the large and small districts in Montana are:

1. Agricultural Education
2. Mathematics
3. Music
4. Industrial Arts

Both the large and small districts prefer math teachers who are qualified to introduce students to basic elements in the operation of computers.

Areas which are overcrowded are:

1. Social Studies
2. History
3. Boys Physical Education
4. Foreign Language

All of the superintendents in all the schools indicated the four areas listed as overcrowded.

The smaller schools stressed the importance of being able and willing to work in extra-curricular activities, particularly in addition to regular classroom load because of the more recent emphasis in girls athletics.

VI. Age was a factor mentioned by all of the people interviewed both in the smaller and larger schools. It seemed as if each would prefer a candidate who had worked in another field for a few years if all other qualities were equal. (Example, former carpenter teaching industrial arts).

VII. The smaller district's representatives mentioned tenure as a major issue when considering a teacher's third contract. One official stated that, in smaller schools, how a teacher adjusts into a community is a very important criterion when considering a teacher for a tenure contract.

Large districts did not seem to be as concerned about tenure, but stressed a concern about salary when teachers did not retire after thirty years.

After interviewing and considering all of the criteria available we established a general outline of alternatives which might be considered, modified, and employed only after the tailoring required by the uniqueness of a given situation.

1. Those college students currently enrolled in secondary teaching curricula should be encouraged to certify in subject areas wherein the supply of teachers is not expected to greatly exceed the demand.

2. College students currently enrolled in secondary teaching curricula should consider dual or even multiple subject certification, thus increasing both options and teaching flexibility.

3. Efforts should be made to acquaint college-bound high school students interested in education careers with specific aspects and trends relating to the oversupply situations peculiar to their subject area or regions.

4. Teacher training colleges and universities should review their current programs and direct attention toward instituting additional professional and technical curricula wherein future demands are more encouraging.

5. Teacher candidates be strongly encouraged to avoid single-field endorsement, if interested in teaching in rural areas.

6. Teacher candidates be strongly encouraged to broaden teaching subject areas with multi-field major-minor endorsements.

7. Lesser emphasis be placed by colleges upon the recruitment of new teacher candidates particularly in crowded areas.

8. Greater emphasis be placed by colleges involved in teacher training to improve the teaching techniques of existing teachers and those teacher candidates currently in training.

9. Student advisors at both high school and college level should become more familiar with the trends in the demand for teachers in rural education.

10. Results of this study should be constantly updated to provide timely information to those teachers just entering the profession and to those secondary teachers relocating or considering a change in professional status.

11. Continual research be undertaken in the areas of future population changes that could affect teacher employment prospects.

12. Further research be undertaken to identify those factors contributing to differences in the hiring preferences of rural district superintendents of schools as noted in this study.

13. Further research be undertaken to identify and predict future teacher supply demands for various secondary teaching subject areas particularly regarding rural communities.

14. Further research be undertaken to more accurately identify those areas where differences between rural district superintendents of schools and metropolitan areas in regard to placement officials were noted in this study.

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